At a Meeting of the DEPUTIES and DELEGATES from the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS of England and Wales, appointed to obtain the Repeal of the Teſt-Laws; at the King's-Head Tavern, in the Poultry, London, on the 29th of May, 1793:

WILLIAM SMITH, Eſq. M. P. in the Chair.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the Chairman be deſired to ſign the following Addreſs, and that the ſame be printed.

Addreſs to the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS of England and Wales.

WE, the Deputies and Delegates from the Proteſtant Diſſenters of England and Wales, appointed to obtain the Repeal of the Teſt-Laws, embrace the Opportunity of the Adjournment of our Meetings for this Year, again to addreſs our Conſtituents on the great Objects which ſo intimately concern them.

Though convinced that every good Subject is equally entitled to the Countenance of Government and the Protection of the Law, and that Offences, not Opinions, are the proper Objects of Diſqualification and Puniſhment, we have forborne to renew our Application for the Repeal of the Teſt-Laws, in the Courſe of the preſent Seſſion; becauſe, while the Attention of the Nation was fixed on the late momentous Criſis of public Affairs, and the Time of the Legiſlature ingroſſed by Conſiderations of the higheſt and moſt immediate Importance, we were unwilling, even by claiming our juſt Rights, to give our Enemies an Occaſion

ſion to propagate the foul Calumny which has been raiſed, that the Diſſenters are hoſtile to the Conſtitution of their Country.

It is with the greateſt Satisfaction that we reflect on the Conduct obſerved by the Diſſenters, at a Time when a Multitude of Circumſtances combined to oppreſs them. In thoſe Parts of the Country where the ſtorm has raged with ſuch violence, as almoſt to compel many of our Brethren to make a public declaration of their political principles, they have not ſought peace and ſafety by any cowardly abandonment of their juſt claims, or by any baſe ſubmiſſion; but, on the contrary, have publicly avowed their conſtitutional Opinions, in language becoming free and enlightened Citizens.

It is, perhaps, here, important to obſerve, that the Liberty of the Preſs is peculiarly intereſting to the Diſſenting Body; for, unleſs the preſs be free, vain will it be for us to expect even the Continuance of the Civil Rights which we now poſſeſs, much leſs the Attainment of thoſe of which we have ſo long been unjuſtly deprived. It is by Diſcuſſion alone that we can hope to produce that general Conviction of the Propriety of our Claims, which will inſure their Succeſs.

We have, with Pleaſure, recently witneſſed a more extenſive Diffuſion of Liberality in the Emancipation of our Catholic Brethren, in this Country and in Ireland, from various ſanguinary Laws which were ſo long a Terror to Conſcience, and a Diſgrace to both Countries. The Legiſlature of Ireland having alſo removed Ineligibility to military Offices, as well with reſpect to Catholic as to Proteſtant Diſſenters, we did hope that the abſurdity of one law exiſting for the Army in this Country, and another for the ſame Army when quartered in Ireland, would have induced the Britiſh Parliament to have paid ſome attention to the ſubject. We ſtill truſt that it cannot remain long unnoticed, and we ſhall avail ourſelves either of that, or any other, favourable Opportunity which may occur, to preſent our juſt and reaſonable Claim to the Re-conſideration of the Houſe of Commons.

We

We cannot but repeat our fervent wiſhes for the moſt ſtrict and cordial Union of every denomination of Diſſenters. We are extremely happy to perceive an increaſing ſpirit of Concord, and congratulate them on being more cloſely united than at any former period. Religious Prejudices are rapidly decaying; the rancorous Spirit of Bigotry is giving place to the mild and complacent Genius of Chriſtianity; and, with the utmoſt ſatisfaction, we anticipate the day when the diſtinctions of Sects and Parties ſhall be annihilated, and Chriſtians ſhall know each other only by the name of their common Maſter.

WILLIAM SMITH, Chairman.

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